WHITHER BOUND?

By

Franklin D. Roosevelt

During the last ten years there has been a greater change in the standards of youth than in many generations before. It is Mr. Roosevelt's thesis that youth quite rightly experiments with life and with moral standards, for it is through unrest and experimentation that civilization is advanced. His analysis of the present trend of civilization is both sane and illuminating and will appeal to every one who wishes thoughtfully to consider the problems of to-day.

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WHITHER BOUND?

A LECTURE AT MILTON ACADEMY

ON THE

ALUMNI WAR MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

MAY 18, 1926

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BY

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1926

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The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

PREFACE

TWENTY-TWO men from Milton Academy gave up their lives, in the course of the World War, for an Ideal. We may be reasonably sure that they, who had felt the stress of conflict and knew the grimness of thwarted advances and inconclusive battles, cultivated no illusions of a premature millennium. We may be just as sure that they trusted those who should follow them, rank after rank, through school and college and out into the world of action, to carry on the torch until the light of their Ideal should bring a change over the face of the Earth.

There is no greater faith than that which knows its own insecurity, yet ventures everything. There is no greater challenge than the challenge which comes to us, to

justify such a faith — to see to it that the dead shall not have died in vain.

Great memories have nothing in common with futile reminiscence, and invoke no idle day-dreams. They decree the forward look, sustain the resolute purpose, bid us march on.

The Alumni War Memorial Foundation at Milton Academy is intended to uphold a living and growing memorial of those twenty-two men, whereby in some measure their faith, and the challenge of their sacrifice, may be made known amongst those who come after them; and some light may be shed upon the problems which educated men must go forward to solve.

Mr. Roosevelt came to Milton to lecture upon this Foundation in May, 1926. In his long tenure of the office of Assistant Secretary of the Navy; in his service overseas, inspecting our naval forces, and later supervising their demobilization; and in his

manifold civic responsibilities since his return to his own country, he has not only himself looked steadfastly forward, but he has become a discerning interpreter of the impulses that are rising in the public-spirited young men of to-day. He looks for a brave answer to the question 'Whither Bound?' And he has given bold and courageous counsel for the advance.

W. L. W. Field

Milton Academy
June, 1926

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IN these two happy days with you at Milton, I have felt very deeply the close association of this gathering with the time, not long past, when all the schools of the nation gave the best of their manhood to a great cause. That crisis called for the highest ideals and received them. It is fitting that, when we who succeed meet in memory of those who died, high purpose to carry on their hopes should govern our thoughts.

After a war it is natural that a period of comparative rest should follow. But the World War brought forth so many new problems for all peoples that our peace must be a peace of action and constructive progress. The men who gave their lives would have had it so, and they call on us to-day to finish their task.

That is why I would speak chiefly of the future, for I am certain that those who served and died on the battle-fields and on the seas gave great thought to the days to come.

So I ask the question: 'Quo Vadis — Whither Bound?'

Forty or fifty years ago a certain citizen of this land was sorely troubled. Brought up in a Victorian atmosphere of gloomy religion, of copybook sentiment, of life by precept, he had lived essentially as had his fathers before him. Yet one day he fled to a far-off country. Sudden changes had come to affect his life and that of his neighbors; human voices were carried to him over a tiny copper wire, juggernauts called trolley cars lined his peaceful roads, steam was replacing sails, sputtering arc-lights were appearing in the comfortable darkness of his streets, machine-made goods were forcing

out the loving craftsmanship of the centuries. But, more dangerous, the accepted social structure was becoming demoralized. Women — think of it, Women! — were commencing to take positions in offices and industrial plants, and demanding — a very few of them — things called political rights; young people were actually questioning the age-long parental right to choose their mates for them; enjoyment and exercise on the Sabbath Day were violating the code of generations of Christian ministers. Worst of all, a handful of these ministers themselves were openly rejecting formulas, and substituting a word called 'love' for the old word called 'charity.' In politics, too, men were speaking of new ideals, and new parties, Populist and Socialist, were making themselves heard throughout the land.

'Surely,' said he, 'the Nation cannot endure — I will flee from Sodom — the time is out of joint.'

It matters not so much to my argument that this shirker fled as that his pending cataclysm has not yet fallen. Yet there are many like him who view the world to-day through his eyes — honest people, good people, educated people, influential people. Unrest in this world of ours is caused as much by those who fear change as by those who seek revolution; and unrest in any nation or in any organization, whether it be caused by ultra-conservatism or by extreme radicalism, is in the long run a healthy sign. In government, in science, in industry, in the arts, inaction and apathy are the most potent foes.

It is necessary to look back before we look at to-day or the future: in this lies the truest value of the study of history. I well remember my old schoolmaster, Mr. Peabody, teaching us that material and spiritual progress has had its periodic ups and downs, but that the up-curves are always

the longer, and that the net advance is certain in the end.

When the triumphs of Rome fell in a tide of barbarianism and the dark ages followed, civilization and Christianity were not blotted out. Working in unseen ways through many centuries they permeated into every corner of the western world, and at last broke through the gloom into the glories of the renaissance. They rose, not as a smoothly flowing tide, but as the result of a great conflict. Thousands died for their faith on both sides. A budding science was labeled witchcraft or heresy. The most modest beginnings of popular government were called unholy. The very study of economics or of philosophy was banned as dangerous to the existing order.

By the year 1500 civilization and progress and Christianity had again come into their own. There followed three hundred years which might be called a period of distribu-

tion and of assimilation of the renaissance. It was the period of the peoples of the world getting to know each other: communication and trade between the different countries of Europe progressed enormously; America and Africa were colonized and the way made open to India and China.

Yet from 1500 to 1800 not many real changes were made in the lives of people. Speed of communication by land and sea showed little gain, and, except for a few great scientific discoveries like those of Newton, science as such was in the groping stage.

It was only in the realm of government, toward the close of the period, that startling events actually occurred. The American Revolution, followed by the French Revolution, marked a new epoch in their field, though their leaven has worked so slowly that the processes of acquiring representative government are still going on.

The next century, however, from 1800 to 1900, and especially its later quarter, gave to the civilized world more physical and mental shocks than any similar period of history. Science won the first practical victory with the advent of steam, first by revolutionizing land transportation, then ocean voyages, and finally industry itself. But the most important factor was the dissemination of education among a vastly larger percentage of the population than ever before. We are told that in the Europe of the fifteenth century, less than five per cent of all people could fairly be graded above the rank of serfs, devoid of even what we would call the rudiments of any education at all. In the nineteenth century the average man and woman obtained at least some hope and possibility of acquiring knowledge.

Yet, when all is said and done, the great inventions of yesterday — steam, telegraph,

telephone, electrical light and power, industrial machinery — had at first comparatively small effect upon the actual lives which people led. Homes in the country and in the city in, say, 1875, were not so very different from similar homes in 1775. The ordinary course of life for most men and women bore at least the same outward characteristics. Routine of work in most forms of employment was conducted with little alteration, and routine of life within the family circle bore striking resemblance to that of former generations. People had time to think at leisure, or time to sit at leisure without thinking at all. Newspapers were read by the few, not by the masses; the morning mail contained perhaps one or two long-hand letters and was devoid of circulars, advertisements, or appeals; bills were paid in cash and not by check; local interests had not grown into cumbersome national organizations; a journey was an event, a

telegram a cause for apprehension. The home, the children, the cousins, the neighbors, made the all-important nucleus around which life was built and maintained. Those of us who can still call up pictures of our grandparents' days can well attest their sound honor, their simple goodness, yes, their *charm*.

It was during the last quarter of the last century that the tremendous strides of science first made themselves definitely felt in the average home; for it is in the home that the practical effect of change last makes itself felt. Once started, this change seems to have gained momentum with each succeeding year, until we come to the point to-day when we can truly say that the lives of the great majority of people are more different from the lives of 1875 than were our grandfathers' lives from those of the year 1500. To come down to the very recent past, there is justification for saying that

there has occurred an even more rapid condition of change in the past ten years.

Viewed historically, then, why should any one express surprise at the loud chorus of protest which rises to-day against what we call the ways of the modern generation? In the fifteenth century nations were rent asunder by actual wars over changes nothing like so great. To-day we howl through the press, we seek legislative remedies, we organize new associations, but we do not go to war. That, at least, is one definite proof of progress.

My old neighbor on the Hudson River, Rip Van Winkle, went soundly asleep, and seemed annoyed, on waking up many years later, to find that the world was very different. Rip has many successors to-day — some old people, and, I am sorry to say, a good many middle-aged people and young people, too. They have not been physically asleep, but they have come to view the world

with eyes of the past. They have pictured a world and a life which they have known and have liked; they have put a little halo around it and said, 'This is mine by heritage and choice — I will protect it and oppose any change.'

The next step for these modern Van Winkles is to justify conservatism by calling all who seek new things heretics or anarchists. Think how often the Bible has been called upon to justify repression of liberal thought; how often seekers after human rights have suffered persecution under the guise of man-made law! That is but natural — what is more wonderful is that Christianity is great enough and broad enough to throw off the control of dead hands and to march forward in step with the progress of mankind. So also with law — from time to time it seems a hopeless drag on progress; but in the end it proves sufficiently elastic to catch up.

That is why I sympathize little with those radicals who tell you that our religion is dead, that our government is basically wrong. The churches to-day are beginning to go along with the new scientific growth and are opening the way to a simpler faith, a deeper faith, a *happier* faith, than ever our forefathers held. In the methods of our governing, also, we have come to accept, or at least to discuss without fear, problems and methods formerly mentioned only by wild-eyed visionaries.

The difficulties which beset the steps of religion and government come from two sources: the solidarity of the opposition to a new outlook, and the lack of cohesion on the part of the liberal thinkers themselves. Naturally every proposed change offers a number of methods of change, and over these methods the seekers of change disagree. On the other side there is but one method — straight opposition, and this

welds together the satisfied and the fearful.

Probably on any given problem of modern life, if a count or classification could be made, the out-and-out conservatives would be found to be in a distinct minority. Yet the majority would be so divided over the *means* by which to gain their ends that they could not present sufficient unity to obtain action. This has been the history of progress.

Measured by years the actual control of human affairs is in the hands of conservatives for longer periods than in those of liberals or radicals. When the latter do come into power, they translate the constantly working leaven of progress into law or custom or use, but rarely obtain enough time in control to make further economic or social experiments.

None of us, therefore, need feel surprise that the government of our own country, for instance, is conservative by far the greater part of the time. Our national danger is,

however, not that it may for four years or eight years become liberal or even radical, but that it may suffer from too long a period of the do-nothing or reactionary standards.

Certainly it would appear on the surface that a natural advantage lies with those among us who dislike to see change. It is so much more easy to accept what we are told than to think things out for ourselves. It takes courage, too, to disagree with our everyday companions; the obvious path is simpler to follow than one of our own making.

A few years ago a graduating class of a certain school answered a questionnaire on their future plans — all were about to enter college. Of twenty-five boys fifteen said they did not have any plans for the future — seven of them were to enter their fathers' businesses, though of these not one expressed abundant enthusiasm at the prospect. Only three had determined on careers of their own definite choosing.

Was this result caused by mere immaturity or mere drifting, or mere following the 'easiest way' on the part of this large majority?

Or was it caused, perhaps in part, by the complexities of modern life?

It is time that more of us of the older generation should sympathize with and try better to understand the complexities of the problems that to-day face the men and women of college age — for at eighteen they are no longer boys and girls. Fifty or even twenty-five years ago, the choice of occupations, of life-work, was limited to a small fraction of the possibilities of to-day. It is not only that hundreds of new fields of endeavor are presenting themselves, but that specialization has greatly complicated even the field of preparatory education.

Do your heads ever whirl at the very thought of all the mixed-up mass of subjects you have learned or ought to learn about?

If, by chance, any of you should hear some one say that young people nowadays do not really learn anything, get out the school catalogue, the Harvard curriculum of 1850 and compare them with those of 1926. Just in the matter of the sum of knowledge the graduate of to-day of necessity must know twice as much as his father did. Why?

Because these scientist people, and economists, and industrialists, and wild-eyed progressives are bringing so many new things into everyday life that our teachers are sitting up all night devising ways and means of passing on in a limited space of time the new knowledge to the generation which will make use of it. And to the teaching profession of our modern world I make humble and grateful obeisance; for it seems to me that while they are recognizing and making provision for the practical needs of a mechanically minded age, they have not lost sight of the graces and refinements of

the arts and letters, founded on a glorious past, which must act as a curb or a softening influence on the mere materialism of the future. It is a hopeful sign that so many of the later modernists are coming to see at least some good in a retention of an outline of classical learning.

If, then, we realize that the days in which we live present great problems wholly new, we may adopt one of two attitudes. Some among us would stop the clock, call a halt in all this change, and then in some well-thought-out way bring back an orderly, defined method of life. Old standards and customs would revive to meet the new conditions, classic dicta would again govern — the 'good old days' restored. It is an attractive picture, but it is a painting of the imagination — not a photograph of the living facts. The other method — but let us wait till we look into the days to come.

I have spoken of the up-and-down curves

of history — or rather of the periods of quiescence followed by rushing, active progress. We are in the midst of one of the latter now. Are we at the end of it? Are we about to slow up, to begin to digest in comparative quiet the huge meal of new activities given to the human race in the past fifty years?

I think not. On the contrary, I believe that more new and startling developments will take place in the immediate future than in the immediate past. With these will come other great changes in the lives and doings and thoughts of the average man and woman. Can we, by artificial means, call a halt? Obviously not.

What, for example, do leaders of scientific thought and research tell us? First of all, that investigation and experimentation will not, cannot, cease, but that they are adding, day by day, in startling measure, to the results already obtained.

Take the field of research medicine — where ten men were investigating in 1910 a hundred men and women are at work to-day. Many old forms of disease have been definitely conquered, not only in the laboratory, but in the field as well.

Last year a small town in Georgia developed an incipient epidemic of typhoid fever. Most of the people looked on it as a necessary evil, some of them as a punishment by God. The mayor and council were worried, the older doctors went their way unselfishly attending the victims. But it remained for a young man just out of medical school to call a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce. He told them in no uncertain terms that they ought to be ashamed of themselves, that no self-respecting community could allow such an epidemic. He asked for an appropriation of one thousand dollars and got it. He examined every portion of the water and milk supply, found the sources

of contamination, eliminated them, stopped the epidemic, and obtained sanction for a new town water system and adequate inspection of milk. That town has learned the lesson of modern science.

Applied biology since Pasteur has deeply affected the lives of every one of us. We have greatly reduced the mortality rate and have made the duration of life longer. This means, too, that death itself is becoming less and less a part of our lives: we begin to expect to live to a ripe old age by right, and not by mere chance. Undoubtedly hygiene and biology will, in the future, more than offset the mortality among those of our unfortunate descendants who insist on 'joy-riding' in aëroplanes.

In another field of medical science, physiology and psychology have begun, in a very limited way, to make discoveries. Their progress will, of course, greatly affect the conditions of man's life.

Here is another instance: Do you remember that only a few years ago we were worrying about the day, soon to arrive, when there would be no more coal, and, therefore, no more power or light? Scientists told us not to worry, that a substitute would be found in plenty of time to save us from utter freezing and darkness. Yet, if you look back into the newspapers of that time, you will find volumes written and spoken in favor of the careful conservation of coal, with dire predictions of the fate ultimately in store for the world. To-day, twenty years later, the subject is no longer of interest. The nations are busy bending the rivers and tides to their use, and we are figuring already that, if the present increase in the need for power continues, all the water available in the world will be insufficient. Do not worry, say our practical students, for by that time the natural heat of the sun and of the earth's interior will be serving mankind. Power and light

will cost less and less, and our lives will be altered to meet their new cheapness.

If, for example, we visualize the nocturnal occupations already created by the use of electric light — the industries conducted on a twenty-four-hour basis — we can picture, perhaps, what will happen when light and power cost one tenth of what they now do.

Again (I quote from a well-known biochemist): 'We are working toward a condition when any two persons on earth will be able to be completely present to one another in not more than one twenty-fourth of a second.' 'Dreadful thought!' you say at one moment. 'How disturbing if so-and-so should tune in on me just now!' Or, 'How delightful!' you say at another moment, when by a twist of a knob or the push of a button you see and talk with some true friend half the world away. I wonder, indeed, if the thought of this probability is one whit more startling to us to-night than the

thought of the human voice carried over the telephone was to our grandfathers?

The future of transportation need not occupy us long. We have seen the primary conquest of the air. We have seen war in the air. We have read, with a passing thrill within ten days, of the conquest of the North Polar area by Byrd in a heavier-than-air machine, and by Amundsen in a lighter-than-air balloon. Cheaper power, canned power, compressed into light weight and small bulk, will make our present flying abilities childish within our own lives. So, too, with transportation by land. If motor vehicles have altered the course of our lives as well as our vocabularies, so, in the days to come, equally great possibilities exist.

Finally, chemistry is entering into a new realm — the production of food by synthetic processes. We dislike the thought of substituting a farinaceous pill for our morning cereal, or a tablet for our eggs; we shud-

der at an apple or a peach made in twenty-four hours in a laboratory. Yet chemistry is to-day developing efficient substitutes for the fruits of the field and the yield of animal life; and it is more than possible that economic law will force upon our race a synthetic diet. For many years one of our gravest concerns has been the growing concentration of population in the cities, the increasing abandonment of farm and country life. Many of us have thought and worked to check the trend, to make the farm a more desirable thing. But if the need for nature-grown grain and nature-fattened cattle decreases with the rise of cheaper laboratory substitutes, the outlook for the farmer is, indeed, bad. If science can make one acre yield what ten did before, and at the same time decrease the demand for agricultural produce, there seems little possibility of checking the flow of the human race into urban communities, for these cities

will have solved at last the question of their food supply.

To me this idea of the abandonment or minimizing of country life in the days of our grandchildren is indeed the most cruel of the prophecies.

Every trend of modern science is toward the greater unification of mankind. Already we go to the other end of the world to stop at their point of origin human diseases which, left unchecked, might spread to us. Factories everywhere are seeking location at the source of their raw materials. Isthmian canals are constructed for world commerce. Sociological problems are examined in the light of the experience of other nations. Backward peoples are made wards of those more advanced. Power is exported. Capital is international. Foreign affairs are discussed by the average citizen. Wars and armaments are the concern of more than kings.

Isolation of individual nations will be as

difficult in this future as would be the isolation of New England or the South to-day. The same laws of the history of progress apply. First, the self-sufficient small community, then the grouping of several communities, then the small state, then the nation, then alliances between nations, and now a permanent congress of nations.

No person who truly visualizes the future doubts that we are at the threshold of an era of coöperative endeavor between peoples and continents. Economic progress — social, financial, industrial, agricultural — is forcing the issue. Science in every branch is working on international lines. Laws and government in each national unit are influenced by experiments in other units.

In the more speculative fields of the study of the characteristics of different human races, we approach another angle. Biology, history, psychology are interwoven in this most modern of efforts, and it ceases to be a

shock when one's children not yet of college age discuss eugenics as well as euthenics.

This is in fact but one indication of the colossal interest which the rising generation is taking in problems and their applications. I use the word 'colossal' advisedly, for I am very certain that we older people cared less and knew less at their age. When I was at boarding-school almost none of us boys read the newspapers, and 'general information' was of no account either in scholastic studying or in popular favor. True, the cry may rise that modern education produces superficiality and glibness, but I cannot convince myself that this is justified. It is not the easiest thing in the world for a man of sixty or of forty to visualize himself honestly as he was in his school days!

In such vein we could go on, not foretelling the future, but listing the possible developments of that future — and when we use that word 'future' we speak of things

that very easily may come to pass within our own lives. When they come — if they come — are you and I ready to meet them?

Therein is the thought which this coming generation asks itself, and because we are interested in this future of ours we seem sometimes intolerant to the older generation. We see great events occurring before our eyes, we picture great changes to come. It is our right so to do.

I see many rays of pure light in that future — I see not merely materialism — new inventions, new conditions, new words: I see something spiritual coming to you who will take part. Service to mankind has been much taught of late, and this word 'service' is, like the material things, still in its infancy of development. True service will not come until all the world recognizes all the rest of the world as one big family. To help a fellow being just because he is a fellow being is not enough. We treat that help too much

as a duty, too little as an interest. How many of us lend helping hands to people we do not like, people who do not 'belong to our crowd,' people whom we subconsciously hope we may never see again?

This old world of ours is still suffering from an ancient disease known as 'class consciousness.' Not a week ago I was talking with a woman about a mutual acquaintance whom I had not seen for several years. 'No,' she said, 'I have not seen poor Jim for some time — you know he married a shop-girl.' Later investigation leads me to believe that 'poor Jim' is a very lucky fellow, and with a much better mate than the other woman would have made him.

Slowly but certainly we are coming to accept people for what they are, not for what they appear or claim to be, not for what their parents were. This does not mean that environment and good parents and education, and even heredity, do not count.

We have proved by science that bad heredity is often a handicap, and that is why even our devotees of pure science will give hearty support to every effort to keep the home, the influence of parents and early training on the highest possible plane.

Do not ever forget that Christ's greatest teaching was, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Certainly we are far from that goal. Yet we approach it little by little. This very future of complications, of change, will hasten our steps along the right path. The necessity of greater coöperation will put every individual into closer touch with every other. More and more we become interdependent. Communities merge into states, states into nations, nations into families of peoples.

To take our part positively and not negatively is our underlying desire; to that end our education aims, and to that end the processes of the moment will work. In an-

other twenty years there will be less happiness in the world for the inarticulate, for those who fail to pull their weight in the crew of their fellows.

I must confess to pride in this coming generation of men and women. You are thinking more deeply than ever we did. You are working out your own salvation in terms that are less selfish than ever before in the world. You are more in love with life, more keenly interested in your fellow beings. You seek causes, fundamentals. You try all manner of experiments, often to the horror of us, your parents. You play with fire openly where we did so in secret, and fewer of you get burned. You learn for interest's sake, not by precept. You live by what you think is right, not by code. Mistakes you will make, every individual and every group, but your errors will be forgiven you if the spirit in which you make them is of high purpose.

In the days to come the heritage of the earth will be yours, and perhaps we ancients will look down on you from the height of the everlasting knowledge and say, 'Well done, boy!'

Then, perhaps, even the sluggards, even the unready, will bear witness that the time is not out of joint. No longer will the cry of the older days go up, 'Hail, Cæsar, we about to die salute you.' Rather can we of to-day and of to-morrow, reverent in our purpose, strong in our hope, say, 'Hail, Lord, we greet Thee, we about to live.'

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